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ABSTRACT

A series of case studies examined the problems of the teacher labor market (such as difficulty in recruiting high quality teachers) and explored avenues for supplying schools with effective teachers. The case studies were based primarily upon 525 interviews with (or surveys of) teachers, school and university administrators, teacher education students, and noneducation college majors. The studies sought to illuminate: (1) the attractors and deterrents to teaching; (2) teacher recruitment and selection processes; (3) mobility and attrition patterns of teachers; and (4) the conditions in which teachers work. Findings indicated: (1) teachers still are motivated primarily because of the intrinsic rewards of working with children or adolescents; (2) many teachers are presently negative role models for recruiting new teachers; (3) school systems have not actively recruited education students and teachers; (4) school systems may recruit better teachers by assisting promising students in pursuit of graduate degrees; (5) in the past, recruitment of teachers has been facilitated by eased entry; (6) increased incentives are important because they are a direct expression of how society values education; and (7) the conditions in which teachers work and the lessons students learn while in public school are the primary forces in today's teacher labor market. (JD)

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THE PROBLEMS AND PROMISES OF THE TEACHER LABOR MARKET: A QUALITATIVE UNDERSTANDING OF PROCESSES AND CONTEXTS

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INTRODUCTION

The problems of the teacher labor market have been well-publicized in the last few years. Critics of public education lament that many teachers cannot teach; those who do teach, don't for very long; and those who can teach, opt for other careers. Much of this criticism has emerged from numerous national reports such as *A Nation at Risk* (1983) and studies illuminating the declining academic ability of the teacher work force (Schlechty and Vance, 1983; Weaver, 1983; Darling-Hammond, 1984). Compounding this problem of teacher quality is the impending problem of an inadequate quantity of teachers due to dropping enrollments in teacher education programs and the increasing population of school-age children in the United States. Most researchers and policymakers attribute the cause of the problem to low teacher salaries relative to other occupations, the opening of other career alternatives to women and minorities, few financial incentives and the lack of career advancement within the occupation, and the lack of social respect for teachers.

Since 1983, more than 700 pieces of state legislation directed toward enhancing teacher quality and improving the conditions of the teacher labor market have been developed (McLaughlin et al., 1985). Some of the more well-publicized policy reforms (such as across-the-board salary increases, career ladders, and merit or incentive pay plans) are distributive and developmental and are intended to increase the financial incentives for academically-able individuals to enter and stay in teaching. A number of other policy reforms (such as increasing certification requirements and teacher testing) are regulatory and are

intended to enforce higher standards by restricting entry into teaching. Ultimately, the goal of these policy reforms is to attract and retain quality teachers so that the public schools will produce the caliber of educational outcomes necessary for the future economic prosperity of the nation. While there are significant differences among these policies, McLaughlin et al. (1985) note that current teacher reforms share a number of features:

1. The impetus for this round of educational reforms emerged not from within the teaching profession but from the broader political arena.
2. The present reforms are based primarily on solutions which, by political necessity, are applied across-the-board to entire classes of institutions and individuals.
3. In many instances, the targets of policy--teachers--have had little or nothing to say about either the problem or the solution to it (pp. 1-2).

In other words, the current reform movement has (1) emerged from the perspective of an outsider, and (2) focused more on political feasibility than contextual validity. However, given the idiosyncratic and complex characteristics regularly observed in the public schools, the process of educational policymaking should consider what Elmore and McLaughlin (1984) have labeled "backwards mapping." This strategy begins where the work is done and examines what would be required for the outcome or product to be effective, then moves backward to the organizational values and structures that are in the policymakers' control. This "requires a deep understanding of the nature of the work

and of the work settings that policy seeks to influence" (Sykes and Devaney, 1985, p. 248).

Very little research has been conducted that adequately supports whether or not current teacher policy reforms pay would positively alter the forces affecting the teacher labor market (Bird, 1984). Many of the "most profound problems plaguing the teaching profession remain inadequately diagnosed" and "many of the assumptions that underlie these suggested cures are unsupported by research on teaching" (Rosenholtz, 1985, p. 350). Sykes and Devaney (1985) have noted that with policymakers "estranged" from the "reality" of the work that policy attempts to regulate, "the tools proposed for government to prevent the threatened shortage of competent teachers are likely to be too blunt and dull to reach the roots of the problem" (p. 244). The authors assert that:

> teaching's recruitment and retention problems extend beyond the ups and downs of the job market to the nature of the work itself and to the conditions that teachers face in schools today (p. 243).

Thus, if policymakers are to adequately diagnose and remedy the problems of the teacher labor market, then, in effect, they must understand both the processes and contexts which undergird market forces. Fortunately, the conceptual framework which guided our case studies and our qualitative analysis enabled us to discover many neglected problems of the teacher labor market as well as numerous promises for supplying our public school classrooms with quality teachers.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Bird (1984) argued that many of the problems of the teacher labor market are ill-defined and, subsequently are ignored in the policymaking process. This is because "the right questions (had) not been identified before data collection efforts began, or the available data (had) not been examined and analyzed adequately to discover the underlying trends, causes, and effects" (p. ii). In essence, Bird's critique of the teacher labor market studies indicated that much of the quantitative research in this area is limited to factors that are tangential to the problem and ignores the effects of processes and contexts. In fact, his call to go "beyond the collection of the simple and descriptive data and beginning the complex process of analyzing the behavioral and institutional characteristics of the teacher labor market" (p. ii), pointed dramatically to the need to address factors impacting upon problems and hopefully, promises.

Our conceptual framework was shaped initially by Turner's (1980) notion that quantitative research is most appropriately used to set "puzzles," not solve them. Turner (1980) argued that the solution of puzzles is an interpretive problem that essentially employs a comparative method. To do so, one requires a grounded framework which encompasses the extant situation rather than deductive labor market theories. In addition, to the extent to which we let quantitative research set the puzzles we examine here, it may be that our error was in not discovering issues that have taken-for-granted status. It is these same issues that are more likely to have dramatic effects on teacher labor markets.

Based on this critique, we turned our attention to insights derived from Lortie's (1975) well-known sociological study of teachers and teaching. In understanding any labor market, Lortie suggested that we must "learn how personal decisions interact with social constraints to produce the aggregate of individual decisions which result in movement into a given occupation" (p. 25). Furthermore, Lortie noted that:

> the *way* an occupation fits into the competitive recruitment system will affect its social composition and its inner life. Occupations compete, consciously or not, for members, and there is a largely silent struggle between occupations as individuals choose among alternative lines of work. Occupations proffer different advantages and disadvantages to those making choices, and people vary in their dispositions and personal circumstances--an occupation will attract some persons and repel others. Out of the combinations which ensue, an occupation will come to be staffed by people of particular dispositions and life circumstances (pp. 25-26).

In effect, recruitment is as much an "ecological process" as it is planning by policymakers and personnel administrators. Thus, important recruitment resources can operate without deliberate control and can be viewed as "attractors" and "facilitators."

Lortie revealed several occupational characteristics which *attract* teachers to teaching. These occupational characteristics provide teachers the opportunity to: (1) have protracted interaction with young people, (2) perform a special mission in our society, (3) find a medium for their school-linked pursuits (e.g., history or athletics) or their blocked aspirations (e.g., drama teachers who couldn't make it as actors), and (4) have working schedules compatible with family life. This latter characteristic has been a potent recruitment resource for women. In addition, for those individuals who are from family

backgrounds marked by economic insecurity and low social status, teaching provides teachers the opportunity to have economic security and higher social status.

In addition, teaching, as an occupation, has facilitated entry in several ways: (1) Teaching has always been omnipresent in the lives of children and adolescents when their career decisions can be influenced easily. (2) Teaching has *not* carefully screened members through highly academic (and therefore, elitist) standards. Unlike other professions, teaching has encouraged people to become teachers at any number of points in their lives and has based selection criteria on interpersonal preferences and attributes. This has given teachers a "wide decision range" to affect their career choice and has given teaching its "subjective warrant"--i.e., "wanting to teach becomes a justification for doing so" (Lortie, 1975, p. 40).

THE STUDIES OF TEACHERS AND TEACHING

Lortie's conceptual framework, based upon research conducted approximately two decades ago, suggests that these attractors and facilitators have acted as recruitment resources for particular kinds of people with particular orientations toward work, teaching, and schooling. We ask: How have these recruitment resources changed for present *and* potential teachers? How will the present policy reforms in teaching alter these recruitment resources? Will the present policy reforms in teaching alter the present labor market behavior of present *and* potential teachers? To answer these questions and to provide policymakers with an insider's perspective of the teacher labor market, we undertook a series of case studies. These case studies were based primarily upon 525 interviews with (or surveys of) teachers, former

teachers, school and university administrators, teacher education students, and noneducation college students (in such "high demand" fields as math, business, the sciences, and engineering).[1] These studies (conducted during 1984 and 1985) sought to illuminate: (1) the attractors and deterrents to teaching; (2) teacher recruitment and selection processes; (3) the mobility and attrition patterns of teachers; and (4) the conditions in which teachers work.

Our findings suggest that a number of complex processes and contexts presently are shaping the teacher labor market. *First*, we found that teachers and education students have been influenced to teach by their own teachers and by their "calling" to guide the development of children or adolescents. On the other hand, high achieving noneducation college students are influenced not to consider teaching because it is perceived to be an unchallenging, unstimulating, and bureaucratic occupation. Also, teaching is perceived by these students to require inordinate amounts of patience in dealing with children and/or adolescents and a tolerance for diverse behavior that they do not possess. In addition, some of these students view teaching children or adolescents as an occupation that would limit their use of intellectual skills recently acquired in college. Importantly, some of these negative perceptions of teaching are learned while these college seniors were public school students. *Second*, we found that school districts do not expend many resources in the recruitment process and that district administrators tend to select teachers on the basis of nonacademic criteria. *Third*, we found that for the teachers who do leave teaching, many leave because of spouse moves and other personal (family) reasons (and eventually will teach in another school system). *Finally*, we found

that bureaucratic and frustrating working conditions are the primary sources of teacher dissatisfaction (and impacts upon teacher turnover). This poor working environment discourages talented, professionally-oriented noneducation college students from considering teaching and encourages present public school teachers to recruit their present students *away* from teaching. This variable may well be the most influential one impacting upon the teacher labor market.

These findings may challenge the efficacy of the present teacher reform movement. For example, the assumptions implicit in such policies as career ladders and merit pay plans are that the best teachers primarily do not enter teaching (or that they exit the occupation early) because of the lack of career opportunity and monetary gain. As we further explicate the findings from our case studies, consider the assumptions that are implicit within these policies and how the contextual understandings derived from qualitative research can significantly inform policymaking.

ATTRACTORS AND DETERRENTS

Much like Lortie's previous descriptions of public school teachers, today's teachers are attracted to teaching by the opportunities to: work with children or adolescents and pursue school-related interests in a "familiar" environment. Additionally, for many female teachers, teaching provides the opportunity to have a work schedule compatible with their primary goal of raising their children. We also found that most teachers (and education students) identify positively with teaching at an early age and, in some cases, do not consider seriously other career alternatives.

Just as Lortie noted, family background and socioeconomic status play a major role in the career expectations of teachers (and education students). In our study, we found that for teachers from rural areas teaching tends to provide them with (1) a "very good" income, (2) the opportunity to work "close to home" and their extended family, and (3) a "step-up" the economic and social ladder of their communities. This latter opportunity benefit of teaching is especially salient for those who are from and teach in "isolated" rural communities.*

On the other hand, we found that for some teachers from urban areas, teaching tends to provide them with "good secondary income" (*if* they have spouses with "good jobs") and more time to spend with their nuclear family. These urban teachers lament that they should earn more money and have greater status. However, they tend to accept the relatively low salaries in teaching as a matter of fact (As one teacher noted: "$22,000 a year for nine months is not bad for teaching"). Most importantly, though is that most teachers are motivated by the intrinsic reward of influencing the academic and emotional growth of young people. Some teachers that we interviewed have career aspirations that are "higher up the economic ladder." But more often than not, their career aspirations beyond teaching (or school administration) are blocked by their own personalities, lifestyles, and values. This variable is especially important for those who leave teaching only to return because their jobs in industry were considered "too impersonal." As one high school chemistry teacher, with ten years' experience, noted:

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*Our study investigated school systems in rural communities which were characterized by low median family income (>$9000), had virtually no economic development, and were located a considerable distance from universities or colleges. These "isolated" rural school systems were uniquely affected by teacher labor market variables.

> I left teaching because people said I was too smart to teach and I did have a fantasy of being a chemist in a white lab coat. The money was better (in industry), but it was dirty work. . . . I did not have the chance to develop close relationships with young people.

Our study of the career expectations of noneducation college seniors reveal several convoluting variables affecting their career decisions not to teach in the public schools.* First, "brighter" college students (as defined by their college GPA and SAT scores), are more likely to be motivated to pursue "challenging" careers and less likely to be concerned about the financial rewards of their future career. Contrary to conventional wisdom, many of these students are quite altruistic in their career aspirations and assert that they wanted to understand their fields "better," "make a difference," and to "continue learning" in a "stimulating" work environment. Thus, public school teaching appears to provide the intrinsic rewards necessary to motivate these college students to become teachers. In fact, a few high-achieving students (especially in the humanities) could see themselves teaching for a few years if they didn't have to endure "Mickey Mouse" certification requirements. These students view teaching as a "fun" alternative for the few years they spend between undergraduate and graduate programs.

However, as public school students, most of these students saw their teachers endure enormous amounts of paperwork, incompetent school principals, administrative edicts, and undisciplined and unmotivated students. Subsequently, these bright college students have been taught

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*Both high-achieving and average-achieving students were distinguished in our sample. See endnote for more details.

by their own public school experiences that teaching is not an occupation that would allow them to "think, analyze, and be creative in their job(s)." But, more importantly, brighter students, who exhibited (during the interviews) a more sophisticated understanding of the subtle organizational constraints placed upon teachers, cannot conceive of themselves entering an occupation that does not allow for professional autonomy and control.

Second, some bright college students do not consider public school teaching as a career alternative because a teacher's tasks are seen as "boring." These students would be bored by public school teaching because they believe they would have to "teach down" to high school students. These students perceive that teaching in the public schools would limit their use of intellectual and higher-order conceptual skills recently acquired in college. In fact, this perception appeared to stem from the manner in which they had been taught (by both their teachers and professors). A chemistry major, who aspired to a college professorship and genetic research, noted that "I've learned so much I couldn't go teach (in the public schools) what I learned in my first year" of undergraduate school. Others asserted that they could not "bring (their subject matter) down" to the level of high school students and would need to teach more than just introductory calculus or physics in the public schools. Capturing several variables that are influencing bright college students not to consider teaching, a physics major asserted:

> I was going to teach high school, but I thought about the discipline problems in the schools. You might not have many discipline problems in physics, but I know I'd be stuck with some basic classes. . . . Even if I taught for a while, it wouldn't be for a career. . . . It would be frustrating to

> teach at that level--if you teach high school physics, all you know is high school physics.

Third, many of these same bright college students (especially those in math and the sciences), who are "intrigued" and "motivated" to "do strange things" and "discover something" important, express that being "stuck away in a lab" would be a more comfortable work environment for them. In effect, some students would prefer "interfacing with a computer and working alone" rather than "interacting with diverse (public school) students." This reflects two important variables that deter some college students from considering teaching as a career alternative.

On the one hand, these students recognize that to be an effective public school teacher, one must "have a great deal of patience," like to work with children or adolescents, and "be a seller--meeting [students] halfway." Also, teaching could not be a career alternative solely because they did not have the necessary temperament to deal with school-aged students.

On the other hand, some college students, who do see themselves as "sellers" in their careers, cannot envision themselves working people unlike themselves (e.g., chemistry majors see themselves working only with a "team of chemists"). In fact, their intolerance for working with diverse groups of individuals may be traced to their own public school experiences. Many bright college students were categorized as "gifted and talented" in the public schools. They were "highly tracked"--i.e., continually placed in advanced classes--from elementary to high school. This organizational arrangement placed them in classes with students very much like themselves and essentially segregated them from other

student groups who were perceived as being less interested in academics and exhibited more volatile personal behavior. When these "gifted and talented" students did take classes where "all the cliques were allowed to be together," strong negative impressions of public school teaching developed. A chemistry major noted:

> I could tell from the chorus teacher what I didn't want to be. She was run over [by students]. . . . She had all of them in her class--all the cliques were in there. I never had many classes with them--I know I don't have the mind set to deal with those kinds of people [students in other cliques].

To be sure, some college students (especially of those in business) in our sample seek primarily financial gain and prestige in their future careers. Many of these students expect to work long hours and earn considerably lower salaries in the initial stages of their careers (e.g., a future retail merchandiser expected to initially earn $16,000 a year for 60-70 hours per week). Although many students recognize the need to go into higher levels of management to earn more money in their respective fields (especially in chemistry and engineering), many of the high achievers do not want to take the management path because of their self-recognized inability to manage people, their unwillingness to accept "all of the authority," and, for numerous females, the anticipation of family responsibilities. This finding surprised us--especially when female business majors told us that long hours and travel are part of ambitious careers in business and many would opt for smaller, "slower-paced" firms (that offered fewer growth opportunities, but more time for one's family responsibilities) during their childbearing (and rearing) years.

RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

At the time of our studies, the recruiting practices of both education departments in universities and local school districts had similar characteristics: reactive and somewhat informal. On the one hand, the eleven education departments in our study sample have relied in the past on "taking those who came to them," establishing "rapport with high school guidance counselors," and utilizing family connections to bolster undergraduate enrollments. Presently, many education departments are beginning to utilize more active recruiting strategies. However, for minority college students, recruitment incentives such as forgivable loans and scholarships may not be enough to entice them into education programs. Our studies revealed that minority students who might not be able to attain the cut-off score for entry into the university's education program, can enter other degree programs and still be recruited by industry. As one placement officer lamented, "industry is real interested in qualified minority candidates. . . . Test scores are important, but not *that* important to them. . . . Recruiters in industry, for example, will come to (a historically black institution) and hire chemistry majors and then send them to school in chemical engineering."

On the other hand, studies of 11 school systems revealed that large applicant pools and *relatively* low teacher attrition have justified reactive and informal recruitment strategies on the part of local school district officials. However, the recruiting context for urban and rural school systems varies significantly.

In urban school systems, officials "assume the right people will walk in the door . . . as people are leaving, people are coming." In these metropolitan communities, school officials have relied on industry and universities which continually attract an influx of academically-able employees--many who have spouses who teach. In addition, urban school officials have noted a number of "experienced, female applicants who are 35-38 years old and *returning* to the classroom." In some cases, these teachers are "teaching again since their own children are grown" or in other cases "the divorce has necessitated them going back to teaching." Subsequently, urban school systems have spent few resources on recruiting (e.g., the largest school district in our sample--with 70,000 students and 4000 teachers--spent approximately $2500 on recruiting in 1984), concentrating on finding people "where there is not enough depth in the pool."

While urban school systems rely on their "built-in" supplies, rural systems tend to rely on those teachers who "want to come back home and teach." In the past, rural school districts would encourage their best high school students to attend a nearby teacher's college and then return to take over for a retiring teacher. Rural school officials "work (their) informal networks" and "sell" their schools to candidates. While urban districts have local salary supplements and more educational resources for teachers, rural school districts are promoting attributes of their schools that have significant appeal to teachers: fewer student discipline problems and greater parental and community support.

Nonetheless, rural systems are faced with some recruitment concerns. Rural systems often have to compete against a myriad of small, neighboring school districts within the same county, wait on state and local budget allocations that are not finalized until midsummer, and lose top candidates (especially minority) to metro school systems with more local money and positions. Rural districts, unlike urban districts, cannot "court and sign outstanding people" early in the "recruiting season" and later place them in the most appropriate vacancy, since they do not have flexible local money.

Although teacher selection is generally characterized as "who knows who," larger school systems that have more centralized hiring processes often inhibit the principals' role in hiring decisions. Bureaucratic procedures, emanating from the central office, limit the potential pool of candidates for building principals. Although all system administrators note similar constraints in the selection process--student enrollment fluctuation and late governmental budget decisions--principals in larger systems note "internal transfer policies" as a hiring constraint. Principals lamented that they "must first select [those] already employed" by the district before hiring a new teacher. Once internal transfers are placed, then principals have the opportunity to assess new candidates--but, "generally only the top five" that are recommended by Central Office. In some cases, due to a lack of communication between Central Office and local schools, the criteria used by personnel officials do not necessarily fit the teacher characteristics sought by principals. Subsequently, principals encourage those people they know (or have been recommended by trusted

colleagues) to work as aides or substitutes so that they may manipulate them into a vacancy. Some teachers noted that the best way to get hired is to have an informal "connection" with a principal.

While selection procedures vary among school districts, our study revealed a striking consensus among administrators and principals regarding the characteristics teachers ought to possess. Administrators desire to hire those teachers with "a certain amount of intelligence." But *more* importantly, teachers need to be able to "relate to children and parents," "organize," "discipline," "withstand pressure," and be involved in extracurricular activities. In many cases, those who are "very bright" are not what systems officials need or want. An urban principal noted that some of these "bright" teachers "turn out to be terrible since they just can't handle people." Rural administrators sought nonacademic chracteristics in teachers for other reasons. One asserted:

> There is a helluva difference between teaching physics and chemistry at the high school level and at the college level. . . . I wouldn't want a Ph.D. from DuPont. . . . We don't have the space [or community desire] for the added challenge.

Another rural superintendent noted that in order to teach in his system:

> You have to love the church . . . not like life in the fast lane . . . have a real appreciation [for those who are] poor and illiterate. . . . Talk about teaching the whole child--our teachers really have to do it.

In addition, having "that energy level" and "being able to think of and understand [students] as individuals" are essential selection criteria. However, in high schools that have "20 different sports and an 80-member marching band," it is not surprising that administrators

and principals "are looking for people who can do more than teach." Therefore, it is not surprising that school officials fill science positions "with a PE teacher who is a good coach--[because] most of them are certified in biology or physical sciences, too." For some, good coaches are "real hard to find." One social studies education student noted:

> I told him [system interviewer] about football. . . . Without asking a question, [he wrote down] "excellent applicant". . . . He then told me, "If I have an opening, I'll call you--if I don't, I'll make one."

But, our study revealed an even more illuminating "story" regarding school systems' concern for coaches. A former physics teacher noted his reason for leaving: "I was dissatisfied with working as a coach and in [this school system] if you give up your coaching, they terminate your contract." Presently, he is teaching in a private school.

MOBILITY AND ATTRITION

Our case studies revealed that the mobility preferences of education students discourage wide ranging recruiting strategies by school systems and the attrition behavior of teachers is influenced by their own famalial concerns and needs. First, we found that urban students want to teach "back home," in their university town, or in a place like their university town. In general, education majors, unlike their noneducation counterparts, have set significant limits on where they will work upon graduation. Rural education students are even less mobile as they want "to teach only back home . . . sometimes working as an aide or substitute teacher" until a job opens. Some rural students who attend urban universities do not want to return home because there

are not many job openings. But, more importantly, some rural education students (especially those who tend to be high-achieving) recognize that their "philosophy doesn't click back home" any more and there are "fun things to do" in their university town. This is not surprising since high-achieving rural students in our noneducation student sample leave their home towns, attend urban universities, and also "never return." One rural teacher clearly encapsulated the "impossible" task of attracting and retaining urban (or "urbanized") students to become teachers in their systems by exclaiming: "What's a young person to do here on Saturday night?"

Second, we found that teacher attrition behavior primarily is influenced by the needs of the nuclear family. While annual teacher attrition rates for the 11 school systems in our sample ranged considerably (from 2.0 to 12.5 percent), there are consistent patterns. Yet, variations among these patterns exist (see Table 1).

Many teachers left their positions primarily because of "spouse moves" and child rearing. In fact, in our 11 sites anywhere from 22 to 80 percent of the teacher attrition (between 1983 and 1985) was accounted for by these two family-related factors. In the inner-city and metropolitan school districts, retirements accounted for 16 and 24 percent respectively. In rural school districts, anywhere from 0 to 100 percent of the attrition was accounted for by retirements. For rural teachers, moving to school systems that are closer to home is a significant cause of teacher "attrition." This is not surprising given the extended family concerns of rural teachers. Other significant reasons for "leaving" teaching include going to graduate school (primarily in education) or taking an administrative job in education.

Table 1

TEACHER ATTRITION: PERCENT OF RESIGNEE SAMPLE BY REASON

SCHOOL SYSTEM[a]	YEAR	APPROX. NO. OF TEACHERS EMPLOYED	RESIGNATIONS	APPROX. TURNOVER RATE	RESPONSE RATE	PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS BY REASON FOR LEAVING TEACHING						
						RETIRE.	SPOUSE MOVE	FAMILY	CLOSER HOME	DISSAT.	OTHER JOB EDUC.	OTHER[c]
1	1983-84	2,000	145	7%	41%	[b]	29	16	6	33	16	-
2	1983-84	4,000	210	5.3%	60%	24	20	15	4	21	4	12
3	1983-84	275	6	2.2%	100%	50	-	-	-	-	17	33
4	1983-84	320	11	3.4%	100%	100	-	-	-	-	-	-
5	1983-84	1,300	27	2.0%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
6	1983-84	270	10	3.7%	100%	50	10	20	-	-	-	20
7	1984-85	40	5	12.5%	100%	-	60	20	20	-	-	-
8	1984-85	80	5	6.25%	100%	-	20	-	40	20	-	20
9	1984-85	100	6	6.0%	100%	-	33	16	33	-	-	16
10	1984-85	180	22	12.2%	100%	27	18	4	32	4	4	11
11	1984-85	260	15	5.7%	100%	13	27	13	13	13	10	11

[a]School System "1" is an inner-city district, "2" a metropolitan district, and "5" a suburban district. The remaining school systems are rural districts.

[b]Sixteen percent of the total 1983-84 resignations were retirements--these were not part of sample.

[c]This category includes: Business Opportunities, "Breaks from Education," Reduction-in-Force, Coaching Changes, Returning to Graduate School, Personal Problems, and Certification Problems.

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These latter two reasons are significant sources of problems in isolated rural school districts--where the nearest graduate program in education is beyond commuting distance. However, one compilation of numbers may be the most telling: Of the teachers who left the largest school system in our sample, 69 percent are either teaching (in other systems), at home (with children), or retired.

However, two other findings surprised us even more. First, those teachers who do leave, did not do so primarily because of dissatisfaction with teacher salaries and career mobility. If teachers did leave because of dissatisfactions, working conditions related to undisciplined students, burdensome paperwork, inept administrators, and uncooperative parents were the primary sources of their dissatisfactions (discussed in the next section). Second, teachers who left for other occupations (primarily those in the two largest school systems) did not necessarily move into more lucrative and prestigious employment opportunities (see Table 2). The occupations that these teachers primarily moved into were sales (real estate or insurance), self-employment (primarily with their spouses or parents), human resource training in industry (primarily with banks), or bookkeeping. Surprisingly, this pattern held for math and science teachers as well.

However, for the few teachers who left for the private sector, they reported that their new employers "valued success" as opposed to "mediocrity" valued in the public schools. Subsequently, their new jobs afforded them a great deal of "self-respect." Perhaps, a former junior high math teacher (who entered sales) in reporting her reason for leaving, summed up a major problem impacting upon teacher attrition:

Table 2

WHERE TEACHERS WENT: PERCENT OF RESIGNEE SAMPLE BY PRESENT OCCUPATION

SCHOOL SYSTEM	YEAR	RESPONSE RATE	RETIRE[a]	TEACHING ELSE-WHERE	HOME	SALES	SELF-EMPLOYED	TRAINER BOOK-KEEPER	SCHOOL ADMIN.	BUSINESS	GRAD. SCHOOL	OTHER[b]
1	83-4	41%	N/A	34	24	12	-	-	16	3	3	8
2	83-4	60%	18	26	25	9	7	5	3	2	4	1
3	83-4	100%	50	-	-	-	-	-	33	-	17	-
4	83-4	100%	80	20	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
5	83-4	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
6	83-4	100%	50	40	-	-	-	-	-	10	-	-
7	84-5	100%	-	100	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
8	84-5	100%	-	80	-	-	-	-	-	-	20	-
9	84-5	100%	-	83	17	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
10	84-5	100%	27	50	5	-	-	-	8	-	-	10
11	84-5	100%	13	40	13	7	-	-	-	7	-	20

[a]Retired and not working.

[b]Includes working as a writer, as a graphics designer, in the military, for the FBI, as a postal clerk, in church work, as a librarian, or unemployed.

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> It was not the money. . . . The reason goes much, much deeper. . . . If the school system appreciated the job I did, I would go back. . . . I do miss teaching kids.

WORKING CONDITIONS

Our brief discussion of teacher dissatisfaction suggests that "demanding," "stressful," and "frustrating" working conditions in the public schools are impacting significantly upon the teacher labor market. Our attrition data suggest that these problematic working conditions are not translated necessarily into teacher turnover. However, interviews with teachers, former teachers, and noneducation college students have led us to believe that teacher dissatisfaction may be the most significant variable affecting today's teacher labor market. Let us explain.

Schools place considerable *demands* on teachers. Large classes, the psychological problems of students, diverse student abilities and motivations, "bureaucratic paperwork," little (if any) clerical support, four and five class preparations, and expanding extracurricular responsibilities require teachers to "wear 50 different hats" in the course of one school day. Teachers reported that administrative support to assist them with these demands is severely lacking in their schools.

This fact turns schools into *stressful* places to work. Our interviews revealed that one former teacher "had to teach in a broom closet" and another reported that she "would have taught better if she didn't *have to* raise $8000 for the Junior-Senior prom." However, most of this teacher stress emerges from deeply rooted problems with administrators, students, and parents.

For a relatively young inter-city calculus teacher, it was the realization that she

> just didn't like (teaching) anymore. . . . It's student attitude and discipline. . . . I thought kids wanted to learn. . . . It's their language, their behavior, the way they talk. . . . They don't have any respect. . . . In my last two classes, we were all hot and tired [there was no air conditioning in her room] . . . I can't teach them anything . . . they won't be quiet and they won't listen. . . . When I send in discipline referrals it takes 3-4 days before something is done.

Teachers reported "students would threaten them," only to be allowed to return to class to threaten them again. Others noted the lack of academic motivation on the part of many students. This stressful condition exists even in "ideal" schools. An elementary school teacher in an upper-middle class neighborhood noted that kids are not as "bubbly about education [as they once were]. . . . It used to be: 'I want to be doctor"--now it's Michael Jackson or Boy George." A high school chemistry teacher (with 24 years teaching experience) in a nearby high school explained further:

> I have a different kind of student. . . . It used to be that schools were the center of the community . . . now, the malls are. . . . Most all of them [students] drive. . . . We used to have home visitation--now no one is home--neither students nor parents.

This latter variable--the lack of positive involvement of parents--\fIfrustrates teachers. Many students come from "broken homes" and parents are not available for consultation. However, this problem is prevalent also for students who come from homes where both parents work and seemingly have less time for their chidlren. In addition, when

parents are involved, the effect can be quite negative. Teachers reported that "there is more pressure from parents . . . when they do visit the school they are ready to jump on you and tear you to pieces." As one first grade teacher with 30 years teaching experience claimed, "You have to be so careful. . . . The child will say 'my mama will sue' . . . and then we let parents win."

In general, administrators, parents, and the community "expect way too much" of teachers and rarely give them "pats on the back." For teachers, the expectation to solve student problems for which they are not trained and the lack of intrinsic rewards for their achievement are the primary reasons for their "burn-out." Teachers are "called" to the task of fostering student learning. However, a myriad of demands and personal frustrations make this task more and more unrewarding and intolerable. As McLaughlin et al. (1986) noted in their recent study of teachers, "It is this inability to fulfill the aspirations with which they entered teaching that drives talented individuals from the profession and fosters dull cynicism in a great many who remain" (p. 420).

Although, many teachers have turned sour on teaching, they remain in the classroom. For many, teaching is "all they know" and many teachers do not consider seriously alternative careers. Many have invested too many years in teaching. Others feel that teaching is what they do best. Many are settled with "husbands (and their jobs), family, and home mortgages."

The result is that they stay and communicate to their own students that teaching is *not* an occupation they should consider. Lortie noted two decades ago that teachers have played a significant role in

recruiting new members to the occupation. Our studies found that today's teachers were influenced to teach by their mentors in the public schools. However, today's public school students--tomorrow's teacher labor pool--explicitly are receiving a different message from their teachers. As one veteran chemistry teacher (25 years experience) asserted: "I now recruit my students *away* from teaching."

THE PROBLEMS AND PROMISES OF THE TEACHER LABOR MARKET

In our attempt to reveal a qualitative understanding of the processes and contexts of the teacher labor market, we found that much of the current efforts to attract and retain quality teachers may fall short of its intended goals. As Rosenholtz (1985) suggested, many of the problems of the teacher labor market still are not being adequately diagnosed and addressed. Perhaps our studies appear to have confirmed Charter's (1967) assertion of almost two decades ago that "the obvious facts about the teaching career are not so obvious after all" (p. 182). On the other hand, we also discovered promising indicators that improvement in the quality and quantity of the teacher labor pool can be achieved. Albeit, policies to achieve this end would be best not to rely solely on rational economic incentives. Let us explain.

Our case studies illuminated numerous examples of problems and promises of the teacher labor market. First, teachers still are motivated primarily to teach because of the intrinsic rewards of working with children or adolescents. However, many of these intrinsic rewards are being rescinded due to demanding, stressful, and frustrated working conditions.

Second, teachers may not be leaving the occupation in "droves" as many policymakers and researchers have suspected. However, many teachers have been "dulled" with "cynicism" and presently are negative role models for recruiting the next generation of teachers.

Third, school systems have not recruited actively education students and teachers. However, with adequate resources and leadership and less rigid inkind policies, school systems could approximate some of the recruiting strategies used by private industry. For example, urban school systems, can align themselves formally with local industry and universities in recruitment efforts for "managers" and their "teacher-spouses." Rural school systems can market the benefits of nonurban living much as industry does in attracting talented graduates to their rural industrial sites.

Fourth, there is evidence that there are "altruistic" college students who could be attracted to teaching for a short period of time. Urban school systems have more resources to attract these students by assisting them in their pursuit of graduate degrees at local universities. However, rural school systems do not necessarily have this valuable recruitment resource to attract "short-term" teachers.

Relatedly, some "bright" college students "bored" by the prospect of teaching "lower-level" skills could be attracted only to teach advanced coursework in high schools. On the other hand, not all talented college students will be well-suited for the myriad of interpersonal and communicative skills required of effective public school teachers. In fact, our studies revealed that the lack of requisite interpersonal and communicative skills (for teaching in the

public school) among "bright" college students may have been nurtured by their academic segregation as public school students.

Fifth, the recuitment of teachers to teaching in the past has been facilitated by eased entry. However, present regulatory teacher policies (such as techer tests and more stringent certification requirements) may limit a once potent recruitment resource for the occupation. These new higher standards may enhance the prestige of teaching (and may ultimately assist in professionalizing the occupation) by emphasizing the importance of academic qualifications in the selection of teachers. However, at the present time, local school administrators tend to select teachers on the basis of nonacademic criteria: interpersonal skills and the ability and willingness to lead extracurricular activities at the school. As criteria such as the ability to relate to a wide variety of students or to coach a sport are added, a corresponding decrease in emphasis in academic qualifications may occur. This finding flies in the face of today's rhetoric which exhorts the teaching occupation to attract and retain the most academically-able teachers. However, policymakers may encourage districts to reexamine the multiple roles which they expect teachers to play and provide resources for districts to hire auxillary professional staff to perform the numerous extracurricular responsibilities required of teachers. In doing so, school district administrators may elevate the role of academic qualifications in the selection decision.

Sixth, distributive and developmental policies (such as merit pay, career ladders, and salary increases) are important, but not because of their potential direct effect on the teacher labor market. Rather, these policies are a direct expression of how society values education

and learning and students. However, if these policies are implemented in isolation, they may inhibit the attractiveness of teaching for the most talented teachers. For example, the implementation of these policies alone will emphasize the extrinsic rewards of teaching at the expense of intrinsic rewards. As Lortie(1986) noted in his reassessment of the structure of teaching and the motivations of teachers:

> Remember that status-related rewards are not a primary concern of most teachers and that, despite declines in their status, teachers continue to feel most strongly about other, more immediate aspects of their work (p. 573).

If teachers are to be enticed to enter and remain in teaching because of status gains (emanating from new distributive and/or developmental policies), they must "see a clear connection between these gains and their primary concerns" (Lorie, 1986, p. 573).

In addition, the modest changes in teacher salaries and career structures that presently are proposed would most likely *not* attract the brightest to teaching--only those who would be willling to tolerate undisciplined students, incompetent administrators, uncooperative parents, bureaucratic intrusions, burdensome paperwork, and a myriad of extracurricular duties for financial gain (as compared to their present jobs). Subsequently, policies such as career ladders and incentive pay may very well attract those whom we say we do not want in the public school classroom. On the other hand, those bright, talented, professionally oriented individuals who we say we do want would not be attracted by these incremental changes in the financial and occupational structure of the public schools.

In conclusion, it is the conditions in which teachers work and the lessons students learn while in the public schools that are primarily the driving forces in today's teacher labor market. This conclusion is not surprising given the subtle, yet powerful factors that are influencing the supply and demand of public school teachers. However, with an indepth understanding of teaching and teachers, policymakers may very well not only be able to attract and retain quality teachers, but also tap into a new pool of talented individuals who could fit into schools and communities under the "right" conditions.

Qualitative research, concerned as it is with the social context, the salient perspectives of insiders, and crucial "local knowledge" (Geertz, 1983), offers a means to provide a better understanding of the teacher labor market. This qualitative analysis of the dynamics of the teacher labor market suggests that problems-causes-solutions are embedded *within* the context of the settings under study. Given both the problems and promises of the teacher labor market, is hoped that qualitative understandings of processes and contexts will assist policymakers in enacting and implementing systemic and interrelated policies. The enactment and implementation of such policies will not be easy. But, surely our public schools and students deserve such efforts.

ENDNOTE

1. The case studies were funded by the Southeastern Regional Council for Educational Improvement (now the Southeastern Educational Improvement Laboratory) in Research Triangle Park, North Carolina. Four separate reports based upon five case studies have been published by the Council (see individual titles below).

The first study utilized six universities and six school systems representative of the geographic, economic, and cultural diversity in the region and focused on initial career choice, position availability, recruitment and selection processes, turnover and mobility patterns, and working conditions and alternatives of public school teachers. Interviews, document review, and field observations in the twelve sites were conducted. The informants interviewed (n = 180) included deans, professors, placement officers, and students in the education units of the universities and central office administrators, principals, and teachers in the school systems. Teachers (n = 85) were selected to be interviewed on the basis of sex, race, teaching experience, subject area, and grade level. Education students (n = 56) were selected on the basis of major area of concentration, race,, and sex. See Berry (1984), *A Case Study of the Teacher Labor Market in the Southeast*, for more details.

The second study utilized interviews with and surveys of teachers who resigned from a metropolitan school system during the 1983-84 academic year. This study described who left, why they left, where they went, and what it would take to attract and retain these teachers in

public education. Of the 210 teachers who had resigned during the year (an approximate turnover rate of 5 percent), 82 were interviewed, and 45 of the remaining 128 responded to an open-ended questionnaire (for a 60 percent response rate). See Berry (1985), *A Case Study of Teacher Attrition in the Southeast*, for more details.

The third study utilized surveys with teachers who had resigned from an inner-city school system during the 1983-84 academic year. The same questions were explored as in the second study, except an open-ended questionnaire was the only method of data collection. Of the 145 teachers who had resigned (an approximate turnover rate of 7 percent), 50 former teachers responded. Given that the initial pool of potential respondents was 122 teachers (the names and addresses of the 23 retirees for the 1983-84 school year were not provided for the researcher), this was a 41 percent response rate. See Berry (1985), *Understanding Teacher Supply and Demand in the Southeast*, for more details.

The fourth study investigated the career expectations of 80 noneducation college seniors (from six representative colleges and universities in the region) in business, the sciences, math, engineering, and the humanities and analyzed factors for attracting and retaining these high-demand students in teaching. Indepth interviews were conducted with average-achieving and high-achieving students (as identified by departmental chairs, GPAs, and SAT scores) in each of the above majors. See Berry (1985) *Case Studies of the Career Expectations of Noneducation College Seniors in the Southeast*, for more details.

The fifth study investigated teacher turnover in rural school systems to better understand the problems facing this unique labor market. This study included indepth personal and telephone interviews

with teachers (37), administrators (10), and former teachers (41) in five school systems in two states in the Southeast. The teacher sample was drawn primarily from those presently teaching secondary math and science. The former teacher sample was drawn from the 1984-85 turnover in each of the five school systems. This sample included a response rate that ranged from 54 to 100 percent. See Berry (1985), *Understanding Teacher Supply and Demand in the Southeast*, for more details.

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